

VZCZCXRO0377
RR RUEHDE
DE RUEHNT #0157/01 0370517
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 060517Z FEB 08
FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9184
INFO RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI 0155
RUEHAB/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 3717
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 9927
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4331
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0189
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0188
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0209
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 3918
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2186
RUEHKP/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0273
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0863
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI 0171
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2312
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TASHKENT 000157

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN BRIAN RORAFF; G/TIP FOR JENNIFER DONNELLY,
MEGAN HALL, AND SHEREEN FARAJ; INL FOR ANDREW BUHLER AND
NORIS BALABANIAN
ABU DHABI FOR DELARAM CAVEY

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KCRM](#) [KWMN](#) [AE](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: STATE-CONTROLLED PAPER RUNS FULL-PAGE HUMAN
TRAFFICKING STORY

Sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On February 1 a full-page article highlighting trafficking-in-persons appeared in the Pravda Vostoka, one of three major newspapers in Uzbekistan. The prominent placement and lengthy detail of the article in a widely circulated, state-controlled publication is noteworthy and a visible warning to unsuspecting Uzbeks about the risks of trafficking-in-persons. Significantly, the article also finishes with detailed information about the conviction and sentencing of specific offenders, which may be a response to consistent pressure from post as well as a Department visitor to demonstrate progress on prosecution. Uzbekistan does not yet have comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation, but there are existing laws it can and does use to punish offenders, and a relevant draft law has now been submitted to the parliament for consideration. End summary.

Full-Page Article

¶2. (SBU) On February 1, a full page article highlighting a trafficking-in-persons racket ran in the Pravda Vostoka (Truth of the East), one of three major newspapers in Uzbekistan. The widely circulated, five-time weekly paper is, like all media in Uzbekistan, state-controlled. LES Political Specialist noted the article appeared as a 2,500 word feature on page 3, a prominent space usually reserved for important current events the Government of Uzbekistan wants to highlight. The article ran at a time when post is compiling information, including official requests for meetings, for use in the annual Trafficking-in-Persons Report.

Prevention: Warning to the Unsuspecting

¶3. (SBU) The story leads off with information about an arrest at the Tashkent Airport, where a young woman bound for the Emirates discovered she was expected to be a sex worker rather than a waitress. It described how the accused traffickers received USD 300 for each young woman they sent to the United Arab Emirates from a Dubai-based Uzbek woman named Iroda Kayumova. The article notes the trafficking ring had a fixer who was able to quickly obtain necessary travel documents for outbound women, and it noted that he could only have delivered these materials "with the right contacts at the right agencies." This is a frank admission that corruption contributes to trafficking since Uzbek citizens need a passport and an exit clearance -- in addition to a visa -- to travel to the Emirates. In this case, the article cited the trafficker's arrogance as her undoing, and she reportedly told an outbound victim that "for girls like you, jobs are always available, and you will work at the brothels until you pay back our expenses." Upon hearing this, the would-be victim resisted and a scuffle ensued, which prompted police and security forces to intervene and conduct an investigation.

Prosecution

¶4. (SBU) Significantly, the article concluded with an analysis of what happened to the accused upon conclusion of a criminal case. The document fixer was sentenced to five years and three months imprisonment; a recidivist involved in recruiting girls in the Samarcand Region received a six-year sentence; another recruiter also received five years and

TASHKENT 00000157 002 OF 002

three months behind bars, although as a first-time offender she was given amnesty (common practice in Uzbekistan); and Iroda Kayumova was declared a wanted person. While the mention of a trafficking bust in the Uzbek press is not unheard of, this is the first article we are aware of that provided detailed information about the outcome of the criminal case.

¶5. (SBU) While Uzbekistan has not yet passed comprehensive anti-trafficking-in-persons legislation, this case clearly demonstrates that there are existing statutes in Uzbekistan that can be applied to trafficking-in-persons offenses. In this case, the accused were found guilty under Chapter Six, Article 135 of the Uzbek Criminal Code, which addresses "the recruitment of people for exploitation." The statute specifically notes that such offenses involve fraud and can include "sexual or other kinds of exploitation." The statute specifies that if the fraud involves removing persons from the territory of Uzbekistan, the punishment is five - eight years imprisonment. This seems consistent with the sentences meted out in this published story. Also, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed post that a draft anti-trafficking law was recently submitted to the lower house of the Parliament (Oliy Majlis), and is expected to work its way through the Senate and become law during the first half of the year.

Comment

¶6. (SBU) The Government of Uzbekistan was angry about last year's Tier 3 assessment, but we have nonetheless consistently heard from key nongovernmental organization contacts since then that awareness and sensitivity among law enforcement officials is steadily increasing. A visitor from G/TIP last fall -- the first in several years -- met with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and emphasized the Department's interest in monitoring convictions; this prominent article may reflect an attempt by the Government of Uzbekistan to highlight its efforts on this front. Post and G/TIP have also repeatedly stressed the importance of comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation to international observers, and

the submission of such a law to the parliament, albeit after many promises, is a positive step. While the Government of Uzbekistan maintains that such legislation is being done out of concern for its people and not because the U.S. told it to do so, it is an area in which our mutual interests converge.

NORLAND